www.leamingtonsociety.org.uk

The Leamington Society

Newsletter

August 2005

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Friends of Leamington Station. The wonderful news for the Friends is that Pete Waterman has agreed to be our President. Mr Waterman, born and brought up in Coventry, is not only very well known for his enormous achievements in the world of pop music, but is also an ardent railway enthusiast. He is currently building a scale model of Leamington Station. We are delighted he will be our president.

Our activities are continuing well, and volunteers (both members of the society and others) are now beginning to work on the terraced garden facing the forecourt car park. This is a truly daunting task due to the level of brambles, ivy … . We are seeking donations towards the replanting – see the enclosed flyer.

Gilding of Jephson Gardens gates. This has now been completed thanks to the very generous donation by David Palmer. The gilding really enlivens the gates, and makes a splendid start to our jubilee year activities. Thank you again David.

LUMP. This is the acronym for the scheme that is intended to make the Parade safer, but is causing chaos in our town and having disastrous effects on the shops' business, and not just in the Parade – visitors to the town are being driven away, so all the shops are suffering.

After a one-year postponement, the work began in April, and was supposed to take six months. The work is already two months behind schedule. This means that just two months (of the six months) work has been finished in a four months period; there is now no chance it will finish this year. After a break for the winter, the work will restart next May; but when will it finish? Central government offered £1m towards the Parade scheme; WCC proposed a scheme estimated to cost £1½m, or £2.2m including the cost of preliminary consultations and associated works. There must surely be significant further costs arising from the overrun. Who is paying?

This Newsletter has three items on the scheme.

Decriminalisation. This is another traffic issue. We all know that parking rules are completely ignored by a significant number of drivers in Leamington, and that there is a shortage of places to park. How will this change when parking becomes a responsibility of the local authority (WCC and WDC combined)? We know that a similar scheme in Stratford had a rough introduction there last year. Will we be able to avoid similar problems, how will it work in our town and what effect will it have on both residents and visitors? We are holding a meeting on October 13th when you will be able to hear from some of those who will be devising the scheme, and to question them.

SPARK. Yet another traffic issue. WCC is considering a Park & Ride scheme to serve Leamington and Warwick, with a 800 place car park at Greys Mallory to serve traffic coming into the two towns principally from Junctions 13 and 14 of the M40. A preliminary estimate of the cost of the scheme is £13.5 million.

Dates for your Diary

Programme for the year is included with this Newsletter

***Pre-Christmas Meetings*:**

Leamington Ironwork
Paul Edwards
Thurs 8th Sept, 7.45pm
Clarence Suite, Oddfellows Hall

Decriminalisation: hunting for a car-parking place
Panel Discussion
Thurs 13th Oct, 7.45pm
Pump Room Annexe

Trouble at the Tate: the fate of Victorian painting, 1900-1950.
Gordon Fyfe
Thurs 10th Nov, 7.45pm
Pump Room Annexe

Inn Signs and Drinking Customs
Graham Sutherland
Thurs 8th Dec, 7.45pm
Clarence Suite, Oddfellows Hall

See back page for more information on these events

Quicks site. Miller Homes would like to redevelop the brownfield area known as Quicks site at Station Approach. They have recently submitted an application for 170 flats on the site, making a density of 127 dwellings per hectare (50 per acre). Their aim is to build a five-floor complex which would loom over the neighbouring houses in Avenue Road, as well as the listed station. The building will cast shadows over these houses and the bowling green in Avenue Road. The Society, working with local residents, the Avenue Bowling Club and CLARA, is actively opposing the new proposed development.

Managing the Housing Supply in Warwick District. A new Supplementary Housing Document (SPD) has been proposed by WDC. This, if accepted by the Council, will put a moratorium on *all* new housing in the District subject to specific exceptions. This should be an excellent change for the whole of the district. After years of frenzied building, mainly of flats, we are already about 50% over our target for 1996 to 2011. The new SPD will put an end to demolition developers offering a substantial premium to owners of houses with large gardens and then redeveloping the site with blocks of flats.

The exceptions to the moratorium are the development of 100% affordable housing, the redevelopment of specific areas of old town (Quicks site and adjoining land, Court Street and Wise Street), "living over the shop" dwellings, and a few others. The SPD is very welcome and should stop the ravages of demolition developers. We hope that it will become effective very soon, and that there are no loopholes.

Archie Pitts

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TAKING YOUR LIFE IN YOUR HANDS

More than £1½ million is currently being spent on making the Parade a safer place for pedestrians but while the work is in progress, the road has become a dusty, dirty, noisy building site, more dangerous than it ever was before:

Crossing Regent St at the intersection with Bedford St
with your life in your hands near the now demolished Woodwards' store

- The most obvious risk is in crossing Warwick Road where temporary lights have been set up far from the regular crossing place
- Very uneven pavement surfaces – especially at junctions between old and new surfaces
- Well camouflaged trench covers to trip up unwary walkers
- Pedestrians forced into the roadway by barriers ending the pavement on one side or the other
- Road traffic travelling North has been diverted from the Parade to Bedford Street; the extra traffic compounded by the demolition of part of Woodwards has created a very hazardous crossing at Warwick Road for anxious pedestrians.

So far there have been no accidents that we know of – perhaps because people have to be so vigilant. Maybe the opposite will be the case when the safe, expensive Parade is complete.

Ruth Bennion

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REMOVING THE BARRIERS

It now seems likely that – after persistent lobbying from Living Streets Leamington Spa Branch – all those ugly guard rails which squeeze pedestrians on Dormer Place, and decorate the Parade Clarendon Avenue Junction will be removed.

What? Surely not? You say! We thought this whole scheme was to make the Parade a safer, less accident prone place. Indeed so. What has been discovered over the past few years in countries like Holland and Denmark is that if you take away segregation, and even all traffic signs, it makes the highways safer.

The first English Authority to take this up was the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea (RBKC). And, to their credit, the Warwickshire Officers dealing with the affectionately known LUMP scheme went on a train to see for themselves.

RBKC is now nearing the end of its three year monitoring period, and all the signs are that safety has improved. Have a think about how people behave when traffic lights fail at a crossing – everyone slows down and takes turns and negotiates with the other people using the crossing – "After you Claude" becomes the order of the day!

Living Streets knows this and has witnessed it, and wants our streets to be the same – a space for social negotiation, where we all have to recognise that this public space is for sharing, not for one group to dominate (which why it's called a "Mixed Priority" scheme).

We know too that disabled people, especially those in wheelchairs, are very glad to be rid of the guard rails – just picture what it feels like to be hemmed in at head height. Visually impaired people may at first feel threatened, knowing the vehicles are so close, but my understanding is that once established, they too acknowledge the benefits.

I know Old Town best because that's where I spend most of my time. I find it scandalous to see many people, including those with children in pushchairs and buggies, and even elderly and infirm people with walking sticks, making their way across the road in front of the Parish Church – weaving in and out of busses and cars – because they really don't see why they should take such a long diversion up Spencer Street as the barriers seeking to impose.

So Living Streets is greatly looking forward to our new look new feel town, and especially when the project is finished by uniting New Town with Old Town, by upgrading Victoria Terrace and Bath Street. But we've been told we have to wait until next May for that to happen. Please be sure to lend your weight to the completion of this scheme and the integration of North and South Leamington.

Janet Alty

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PAVING THE WAY FOR THE FUTURE?

As relative newcomers to Leamington, we, at ***musthave***, believe that the Town has two significant differentiating characteristics:

- The number of good quality independent retailers in the town. As Britain's High Streets are progressively losing their individuality, Leamington stands out with its unique and refreshing balance of well known chains and interesting independents. Most visitors to Leamington would agree with this statement and appreciate the value of a varied shopping environment.
- The quality of the built environment and the impact of the architecture on visitors to the Town. While we are not claiming to be experts on the architectural styles of the last 200 years, having visited a large number of towns in the search for our first retail premise, it is the quality and quantity of the Regency architecture in Leamington which sticks in the visitor's mind. The District Council, and I am sure a number of other stakeholder groups, are rightfully protective of the architectural style of the Town.

Against this backdrop it is extremely disappointing to discover that Warwickshire County Council have a complete lack of understanding of the dynamics of these unique assets on their doorstep. Their management of the LUMP scheme has shown no understanding of the requirements of local businesses, and significant parts of the Town have been hidden behind excessively long runs of aras fencing. After many months of

expensive consultation it is astonishing that the level of planning and communication should fall so short of the agreements made with the consultation committee.

At ***musthave*** we have a fresh juice bar which is frequented by many of the other small businesses close by. Very soon after the start of the project we were having discussions with several other owners who were experiencing a significant downturn in their business, mainly due to reduced footfall. Everyone's complaints were very similar and centered on the lack of communication, most retailers in our sector of The Parade had been given a maximum of 4 days notice of the start of the works and no clear indication of when it would specifically affect them or the magnitude of what was planned.

Looking down the Parade from Superdrug

Within two weeks a considerable section of the west side of The Parade was fenced off and frustratingly little or no work seemed to take place after the existing pavement had been dug up. Faced with poor trading figures and fewer customers the time had come to challenge the WCC and the contractors, Mowlem, on their conduct and seek the support of the local council officials and James Plaskitt MP. We have lobbied all of these bodies aggressively and attended and hosted a series of meetings to try to improve the disastrous situation.

We are extremely upset to report that the project is currently eight weeks behind schedule, and that the originally planned scope of works has had to be reduced to retain the originally scheduled completion date. The works to the south of the Leam bridge have been postponed to next year.

It is staggering that the Council are unable to provide the necessary factual information, which local businesses need to be able to plan and run their businesses at this advanced stage of the works. For example, The Parade is to be closed for resurfacing in two phases, namely Regent Street north to Clarendon Avenue, and Regent Street south to Dormer Place. The first phase – the north section, has recently been put back 3-4 weeks and there are still no dates for the south section. Putting pedestrian access to one side for a moment, the impact of the above on deliveries is considerable.

It seems a real shame that the standards required of those undertaking development within the Town, whether on individual or multiple properties, do not seem to apply to those undertaking these particular works.

Andy Sutcliffe, musthave, 138 the Parade

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THE PARADE: "MOST TORTURED THOROUGHFARE IN EUROPE"

Report on a meeting of councillors at the Town Hall:

Ald. Durham asked during question time when the excavations being continuously carried out on the Parade were likely to be ended, or must they, like Tennyson's brook, "go on for ever"? The Parade, he said, was the most tortured thoroughfare in Europe. For years it had been in an exasperating condition. Apart from the excruciating noises of mechanical drills to which shop-keepers and residents were subjected, traffic was thrown into chaos, bus drivers or people not knowing where the stops were.

No member of the Council could walk down the Parade without hearing complaints as to the Council's incompetence and inefficiency. Visitors openly sneered.

Ald. Ashton (Chairman) of the Highways and Town Planning Committee said the programme for the Parade was formulated two or three years ago in consultation with the County Surveyor. The County Council was responsible for the repairs and the Government grant was 75 per cent., the Borough Council acting as agents.

The cost did not fall directly on the ratepayers. … The work was being carried out in sections, owing to Government embargo on capital expenditure all at one time.

There could be no point in working overtime as the operations were done in sections to obviate the closing of the whole of the thoroughfare.

It was obvious that some dislocation was unavoidable. Proper foundations had not been constructed for a hundred years, and the present heavy traffic had not been envisaged. The present work was necessary to save greater expense in the future.

Ald. Southern (Chairman) of the Water and Sewage Committee) said there was no discontent about the operations relating to the sewer, which, after 150 years, had caved-in in one or two places. When a sewer fell into disrepair it obviously had to be reconstructed; otherwise people's cellar would be flooded with sewage.

Counc. Overell: Can we hear why there has been protracted delay?

From The Courier, 1952. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

Thanks to Robin Richmond for finding this item

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PHYSIOTHERAPY IN LEAMINGTON

This society argued strongly against the closure of the Physiotherapy facility in Station Approach. The Health authorities called a public consultation meeting, albeit one with little notice or publicity, where our members expressed their strong opposition to the closure. Patients attending Station Approach for treatment were asked what they thought of the proposal; they were totally against it. Your Chairman and a number other members spoke against it at various meetings, including at the Management Board of the South Warwickshire General Hospital Trust (SWGHT).

We were told that money had to be saved – the closure is a cost cutting exercise. We also learnt that the hospital estimates it will gain £26,000 a year, and perhaps more than £30,000, from being able to charge for car-parking by patients attending physiotherapy treatment at Warwick Hospital – in the evenings and at weekends. So Leamingtonians will not only have to travel to Warwick for treatment, perhaps with difficulty since they need physiotherapy, but also have to pay for car parking. What a sad end to a century and half of therapy, for which the town got its name as a spa town.

And what was the point of the consultation which the SWGHT admitted had showed that the public was, virtually unanimous in saying that it did not want the Station Approach facility closed? The Trust was set on closing it anyway. Is it any wonder that the public is ever more sceptical of consultation, the political process and of politicians in general/

Major changes of health provision in South Warwickshire have to be discussed with the County Council; they view the closure of Physiotherapy provision at Station Approach to be a major change, and are not happy with the decision. They have referred the matter to the Secretary of State; we must hope for a reprieve.

Archie Pitts

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NEW CAR PARK AT THE STATION

Chiltern would like to build a 150 place car park on the North side of the station. More rail parking is needed, and the parking situation in and near the station will surely become much worse when Quicks site is redeveloped in whatever way, and the current parking on Quicks site land has to move elsewhere. The society obviously regrets the removal of the green area now at the site, but we realise the need for more parking. However we strongly advocate that the car-park should be combined with a new entrance to the station on the North side, ie on the town side, as is fitting for a tourist town like ours. The tunnel running from the booking office towards the staircase to Platform 3 could be taken a relatively short distance further to an entrance to the North side of the station facing the town.

Archie Pitts

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A NEW CD OF OLD LEAMINGTON SPA

The Pump Room, Leamington Spa

The Leamington Elders are a group of active retired people who meet regularly to improve their computer skills and to offer their services to voluntary groups in the local community. We maintain the Warwick District Community website – www.warwick-district.org.uk and have helped to set up several other community websites, among which is the Leamington Society's website at www.leamingtonsociety.org.uk

Two years ago we started a major new local history project. Helped with a grant from the Lottery under the 'Awards for All' scheme, we aimed to create a multi-media archive on a CD, to be called 'Leamington Memories'. It would consist of reminiscences of elderly and retired Leamington Spa citizens, and will be a collection of old photographs, plus film clips from the past. Due to pressures of time and other factors that noble aim has been scaled down and the result is a Powerpoint slideshow entitle "Leamington Spa – from George III to George VI".

The project was led by the Reverend Elisabeth Mordecai, a well-known personality in Leamington Spa, with technical assistance by Tom Holloway. Bill Gibbons, local historian and author of many excellent books about Leamington Spa, including 'Royal Leamington Spa – images from the past', generously gave us great help and encouragement and permission to use many of his pictures.

The resulting CD is now available and we offer it to Leamington Society members. We make a small charge of £3 to cover our material costs, £1 of which will be given to the Society.

For further information please email Tom Holloway – tom@holloways.org – or telephone him on 01926 771772.

Tom Holloway

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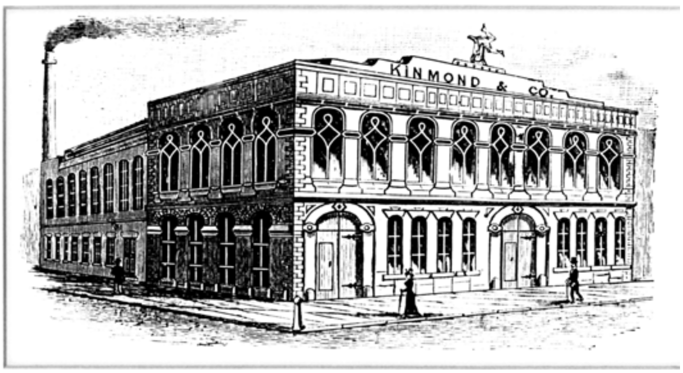
KINMONDS

From time to time some of us will have looked at a building and wondered about its history, or heard a name and wanted to know where it came from. For me it was both, Kinmond Court, Kenilworth Street, an attractively coloured brick decorated Victorian building, that you may remember as the warehouse of the late wholesale fruit and vegetable merchants Griffin & Steele, now converted into retirement apartments. Kinmond was a name I had not previously heard of in Leamington. It was that of a family originally from Scotland who in 1871 purchased for the sum of £2,000 from James Daily, 4 Grand Parade, Leamington, his machinery, the "results of his experience of 30 years" in making mineral waters, and the agreement from him not to continue to make within a fifty mile radius of Leamington the mineral waters for which had acquired 'celebrity' under his name.



Kinmond & Co. about 1900

Kinmonds set up their factory in Kenilworth Street and enlarged their premises from time to time until it covered an area of 20,000 sq. ft. expressly built for the manufacture of mineral waters. It was said to be the largest and best arranged of its kind in England. It was a prominent feature in the town, there being so little other manufacturing. Kinmonds

had acknowledged the good reputation of Daily by incorporating the name into that of their own new company, which was known as ‘Kinmond & Co (Late J. Daily & Co)’, and seemed determined during the two years which followed the purchase to equal it. A large amount of capital and effort was invested during that time and the business nearly quadrupled. It was said that in July 1873, 341 tons 2 qrs. 14 lbs. were distributed by rail to their agents throughout England and Wales at a carriage cost of £397 2 0d. The famed mineral waters could be had at any hotel and at all chemists and wine merchants. Their products included Leamington Spa and Brighton Seltzers, Soda Water, Sherryade, Lemonade, Ginger Ale, Orange Champagne, Quinine Tonic Water, Potassium Water and Lithium Water. All of these were available in the patent French siphon bottles in clear white glass, which Kinmonds were the first to introduce into this country.

However, for whatever reason, in 1873, James Daily broke the legal purchase agreement and began manufacturing mineral waters in the vicinity using a label very similar to that of Kinmonds. Kinmonds took him to court and won an injunction preventing Daily from setting up in business in the area under any version of his name.

Kinmond Court 2005

The water supply was wholly obtained from a bed of rock super-imposed on an “immensely thick bed of pure sandstone” said to “dip in every direction”. Kinmond’s water supply was nearly 100 ft. below that of the local supply. The success of the Kinmond company was due to the exceptional purity of the water, the perfect cleanliness of the whole establishment, and the powerful and original new machine installed for washing bottles – a process “independent of the operators’ will”. Bottles were returnable by customers in those days. The new machine was designed by Kinmonds and was no doubt the invention of the elder Kinmond brother, James Crichton, who was an engineer. Two younger brothers, John and Thomas, are listed as Mineral Water Manufacturers, and the third, David, as a teacher. Bottling was a hazardous business due to the pressure exerted on the bottles, many of which exploded, putting workers at risk of cuts from flying glass. Explosions could take place during the various stages of production – filling, labelling, packing, storing and loading. However, there seem be no reports of any serious accidents.

James Crichton Kinmond died around 1900 and in 1904 his son Captain C.S.C. Kinmond appears at his mother’s home. By 1925 it seems that he had given up his army career and is listed as C.S.C.Kinmond, J.P. (Orkney) with his own address, Carstairs, 19 Lansdowne Circus. He was assisting his Uncles John (no recorded issue found), and Thomas (who only had two daughters), both by now in their seventies, in the Company. By 1935 the Kinmond in charge was C.S.C., the nephew. It was announced in a 1935 Courier that the Leamington Aerated Waters Company of Chapel Street/George Street and Kinmonds were to amalgamate for reasons of business efficiency, the new company to be known as Kinmonds Ltd. The factory was to be entirely re-organized and the latest plant installed.

It was proposed that at a later date the entire manufacture of mineral waters would take place in Chapel Street, and the directories of 1939 – 1963 list Kinmonds Ltd. at Chapel Street/George Street. Cyril S.C. Kinmond JP, son of James Crichton, together with W.H.C. Burgess, sat on the Board of the new company. All employees were retained. Kinmond Ltd. ceased to trade in 1963/4, but the name lives on as Kinmond Court, the retirement accommodation in the original company building in Kenilworth Street.

Jeannette Oubridge

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We welcome the new members:

Mr Ralph Tredwell and Mrs Rachel Chesterfield

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Chairman

Archie Pitts
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Planning Representative
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Tom Holloway
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Other Committee Members
Ruth Bennion 421862
Tim Griffiths 400537
Jeannette Oubridge 421321
Mark Sullivan 330104
Margaret Watkins 425733

Newsletter Distribution
Jo Clark

The Leamington Society is a registered charity. It is affiliated to the Civic Trust and to the West Midlands Amenity Societies Association. It exists to preserve the heritage and improve the character of Royal Leamington Spa and to encourage high standards of planning and architecture.

Charity No. 516078

Unless otherwise indicated, views expressed in these newsletters are the contributors' own and not necessarily the corporate view of the Society.

PLANNING MATTERS

1 The part of the new draft Local Plan dealing with conservation matters has been presented to the Conservation Area Advisory Forum. It generally looks good and is something I think we can support. The real test comes in the future when it must be applied to all applicants big or small.

2 It is disappointing to discover how many of our comments at CAAF are later ignored, not so much by the Planning Committee, but by the recommendations of the case officer. The problem seems to be that by the time an application goes out to consultation, it is too late. This is because negotiations have been going on for months or more between the case officer and the developer, leading up to a state where the officer feels he or she must support the application.

3 It is sad to see that after all the meetings on the Parade Safety Scheme, we have such poor quality paving in such an important street. We asked many times for quality York stone, as seen in other important historic town centres up and down the country, and recently in Warwick town centre.

Paul Edwards

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Talks to November 2005

Leamington Ironwork, September 8th, Oddfellows, 7.45

Paul Edwards, a highly regarded landscape architect and long-standing member of the society, will tell us about the decorative ironwork for the balconies, verandas, railings and gates that contribute greatly to the charm of Regency Leamington Spa. Paul has designed ironwork for many stately homes, notably for the recreated Victorian Rose Garden at Warwick Castle, as well as in Leamington.

He will talk about the various types of iron and steel used before concentrating on Leamington and some other Regency towns.

Decriminalisation: Hunting for a car-parking place, October 13th, Pump Room Annexe, 7.45

A panel of five or six will discuss the looming change of patrolling the parking of cars in Warwick District. The police will no longer be responsible for monitoring parking on the local streets; instead this duty will be handled by WDC who will employ staff, perhaps a couple of dozen in the centres of Leamington, Warwick and Kenilworth, to carry out these duties, issue parking tickets and collect the ensuing fines. It is hoped this will lead to responsible car parking on the streets and more parking off-street.

Trouble at the Tate: The fate of Victorian painting, 1900-1950, November 10th, Pump Room Annexe, 7.45

Gordon Fyfe, a member of the society and art historian who is editor of several art journals, will tell us how the poet Stephen Spender recalls that his father demonized modern artists such as Augustus John and Vincent Van Gogh and ranted on about the 'lunatic asylum' rooms at the Tate Gallery. Today, the outrage that was provoked by the sight of impressionist and post-impressionist art in the early 20th century is gradually sliding out of living memory.

The talk will relate some acrimonious and farcical encounters between traditionalists and modernists in art which enveloped London's Tate Gallery in the early 1900s.